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COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNATIONAL
YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Item 4 of the agenda

PROGRAMME OF MEASURES AND ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN CONNEXION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Observations Received from Governments, Specialized Agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations

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Part I

Observations Received from Governments

JAMAICA

[Original: English]
29 September 1964

The Permanent Representative of Jamaica worked in collaboration with the officers of the Committee on the Working Paper on the "Programme of Measures and Activities to be Undertaken in Connexion with the International Year for Human Rights" so that it incorporated the views of the Jamaica Government, and therefore any further comments must of necessity be brief. They are as follows:

1. Proposed International Conference

The Jamaica Government had envisaged from the time of proposing the resolution on the International Year for Human Rights that the international review of the progress achieved in the field of human rights should be undertaken by means of a conference convened expressly and exclusively for that purpose. In the opinion of the Government no other method of undertaking the review will be equally satisfactory.

2. Programme of Measures and Activities to be Undertaken during 1968

International Conferences on Freedom of Information

The Government of Jamaica proposes that the Committee consider whether it would be practicable to invite and encourage the leading newspapers and news services in various parts of the world to hold an international conference or a series of regional conferences on freedom of information early in the year 1968. This proposal does not envisage a conference (or conferences) under the auspices of the United Nations, but rather that the newspapers and the news services should be entirely responsible for the organization.

LAOS

[Original: French]
1 September 1964

Individual freedom

The United Nations should draw up a real charter of individual freedom, to which all Member States should accede; this charter should include very strict rules concerning:

The right of the individual to be protected against arbitrary or unlawful arrest or detention on the part of the public authorities;

The right of the individual to be protected against any arbitrary or unlawful assault on his person on the part of the public authorities.

Freedom of conscience and religious freedom

Member States should give a sincere account of their work to promote religious freedom, or at least religious tolerance, and freedom of conscience.

Racial discrimination

Lastly, all forms of racial discrimination should be abolished.

NETHERLANDS

[Original: English]
15 September 1964

The Government of the Netherlands carefully studied the contents of Working Paper ST/SG/AC.5/3 suggesting a programme of measures and activities to be undertaken in connexion with the international year for human rights, as well as the summary records of the first round of discussions in the Committee on the International Year for Human Rights.

The comments to which these documents give rise already having been expressed in general by the Netherlands delegate in the Committee (ST/SG/AC.5/SR.3), the Netherlands Government prefers to limit itself at this stage to stressing two observations which it deems of greater importance.

Without anticipating the decision whether or not an International Conference on Human Rights be held in 1968, the Netherlands Government is of the opinion that in the affirmative case financial considerations make it imperative to have this Conference substitute the three regional seminars which in 1968 normally will take place in the framework of the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights. The funds to be set aside in the budget for 1968 for these advisory services could thus be made available for the International Conference.

The suggestion contained in paragraph 38 of document ST/SG/AC.5/3, viz., to prepare and complete an entirely new convention to be added to the list of international instruments which should be completed and opened for ratification before the end of 1968 seems well-nigh impossible to realize. The agenda of the Third Committee of the General Assembly already is over-burdened with international instruments, many of which are of an urgent character and await completion already for a long time, as for instance the international covenants on human rights and the various instruments with respect to racial discrimination, religious intolerance, right of asylum, freedom of information etc. It must be feared that at this stage a further extension of the existing codification programme in the field of human rights will bring about still greater stagnation and result in causing disappointment and frustration of the public opinion.

REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

[Original: French]
17 September 1964

The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam can but welcome the fitting decision of the United Nations to designate 1968, the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Declaration, as International Year for Human Rights, in which to review the progress made in that field and to prepare new plans for the years to come.

In the opinion of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam it would be desirable to include in the programme of measures and activities to be undertaken during that anniversary year an active campaign whereby the principles that inspired the Declaration of Human Rights would be propagated and disseminated in countries where fundamental human freedoms are trampled underfoot in the most outrageous manner.

It would also be desirable for the United Nations to undertake to promote, by all appropriate means, the provision of education and assistance for ethnic minorities, so that they may attain the same level of culture as the more advanced dominant national groups with whom they form one people.

Part II

Observations Received from Specialized Agencies

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

[Original: English]
16 September 1964

At the last General Assembly at the Third Committee [FAO] proposed the inclusion of an article in the Draft Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in order to give recognition to man's right to freedom from hunger. [FAO's] proposal was accepted, and adopted by the Third Committee. Consequently, FAO has a special interest that the Committee on the International Year for Human Rights should include in its programme man's right to freedom from hunger, and that it should be one of the items to be selected for special treatment among the subjects to be focused upon during the year. If this is agreed, we in FAO could organize commemorative ceremonies to that effect.

As regards the International Conference on Human Rights, FAO itself is hoping to convene another World Food Congress in 1968 in pursuance of a resolution passed at the first World Food Congress. This resolution urges the holding of a World Food Congress periodically to review a world survey, presented by the Director-General of FAO, of the world food situation in relation to population and over-all development, together with a proposed programme for future action. Because this Congress would review matters having a direct bearing on man's right to freedom from hunger, its principal conclusions and recommendations could very well be highlighted at the proposed International Conference if the World Food Congress takes place beforehand.

[FAO is] also in agreement with the several other measures and activities already discussed by the Committee vide Working Paper ST/SG/AC.5/3. [FAO is] ready to participate in all of them to the extent that its resources will permit.

Part III

Observations Received from Non-Governmental Organizations

THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN

[Original: English]
22 September 1964

The International League for the Rights of Man has the honour to submit the following observations on document ST/SG/AC.5/3.

We congratulate the Chairman of the Committee on the International Year for Human Rights for his valuable contribution in drawing together and formulating suggestions as to measures and activities that might be undertaken by inter-governmental organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations in connexion with the International Year for Human Rights (1968). In our view, if these suggestions were effectively implemented, they would contribute materially to the advancement of human rights in the participating countries. In assessing them, as well as further suggestions that may be forthcoming, the Committee will naturally wish to consider not only their desirability but also their feasibility.

In paragraph 13 (Part I), the Working Paper suggests that "a series of subjects dealing with particular aspects of human rights should be selected" with a view to focusing continuing attention on each of these subjects throughout a particular period of the Year. During each period, Governments would review, against the standards of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, their domestic legislation and practice in the particular area, would make special efforts to promote understanding among their citizens of the nature and significance of the rights in question, and would endeavour to bring them up to standard.

We find this an exciting and imaginative proposal and hope it will be approved. We support it, even though we recognize it may prove difficult to implement, except to a limited degree, in some countries. But even partial implementation can contribute materially to the goals of the Year.

In paragraphs 16-18, it is suggested that if by 1968 the Draft Covenants on Human Rights together with effective measures of implementation have not been adopted, one of the objects of the Observance should be to promote support for effective national and international organs of international implementation to which NGOs and other private groups could bring complaints of human rights violations.

We believe this is an important proposal and hope the Committee will approve it.

Paragraphs 20-27 present a catalogue of proposed activities, many modelled on projects undertaken in connexion with the observance of the 15th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many of these suggestions have proven valuable in the past and should receive the Committee's approval. No one can doubt, for example, the value of disseminating the Declaration in as many languages as possible; or of encouraging television and radio to produce documentary or dramatic programmes relating to human rights.

On the other hand, we wonder whether certain of these proposed activities, because of their inherently general character (for example, the issuance of human rights stamps by Member States), may not be of illusory value. We wonder, in fact, whether it might not be warranted to delete some of the lesser proposals in order that the more promising ones might be highlighted and enlarged upon: for example, that Governments proclaim the Year as an occasion for a grant of amnesty and other measures of clemency to political prisoners; that schools and universities organize courses and seminars on human rights, and that NGOs encourage communities to prepare lists of questions with a view to assessing the communities' effectiveness in promoting the principles of the Declaration.

One of the most interesting suggestions, discussed in Part II of the Working Paper, is that relating to the proposed International Conference on Human Rights in 1968, envisaged as having three functions: (1) review of progress made in human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (2) evaluation of the effectiveness of techniques currently in use by the United Nations in the field of human rights; and (3) preparation of a programme of further measures to be undertaken after 1968.

The Human Rights Commission resolution, by which the Committee was asked to consider this proposal, did not indicate the nature of the sponsorship of and participation in the proposed conference. The Working Paper expresses a preference for a specially organized conference of States rather than sponsorship by one of the specialized agencies or the setting aside of part of the General Assembly's regular session for the purpose.

We strongly endorse the idea of such a conference in 1968, and agree that it should be a specially arranged conference of Governments. While we recognize the obstacles and limitations of an inter-governmental conference in dealing with the suggested themes, we believe it is possible to find ways of avoiding the difficulties. For example, a formula might be adopted whereby each Government would nominate one or more experts to take part in the conference in their private capacities, and accredited non-governmental organizations might be invited to designate official observers. Alternatively, regional seminars, held simultaneously in the major regions of the world, might be devoted to the subjects proposed, and followed up by a review of the results during a period allocated from the 1968 session of the General Assembly.

On the substantive side, we wonder whether the first of the three proposed conference themes - review of progress made in the field of human rights since 1948 - is feasible, and whether the conference might not prove more manageable and productive if principal attention was centred on the second and third themes, namely, evaluation of techniques currently in use by the United Nations, as such, and preparation of a programme of revised or new measures that might be undertaken. While we would welcome a genuine review of human rights progress, including areas of difficulty, we are concerned that if the review should be conducted in general terms, it may not shed much light on the real issues; and if, on the other hand, it should be made specific, it may break down under the weight of polemic.

We endorse the goals specified in paragraph 39, regarding efforts to encourage ratification of human rights conventions. On the other hand, though we recognize the merit of the proposal to select certain additional practical goals - that is, to seek the elimination by the end of 1968 of some of the grosser forms of human rights denials persisting in the territories of certain States - we question the practicability of the proposal. Thus, the goals of eliminating all forms of discrimination and of colonialism, or of achieving freedom and independence for all countries, are too complex and encompassing to constitute a practical programme for the Year. Rather, we would suggest more tangible goals of an institutional nature along lines of those proposed in paragraphs 16-18.

We view favourably the suggestion in paragraph 42, that all Governments be invited to establish advisory committees of independent and impartial individuals to assess by 1967 the entire body of national legislation against the standards of the Universal Declaration, and to recommend changes needed to bring legislation into conformity with these standards by 1968. We can see value even in partial implementation of this proposal, which is the most that can be expected in many countries.

We endorse the general suggestions contained in paragraphs 45-48, that efforts be made to mobilize the resources of primary as well as secondary schools and other institutions of higher learning; of the press, radio and television, and of foundations and charitable institutions, to participate in the process of human rights education. We hope the Committee will spell out these suggestions in somewhat more detail.

Naturally, programmes to mobilize these resources would take varying forms in different States. While in some, Governments would be expected to play an active role, in others, governmental initiative would not be the most effective way to achieve the objectives sought. In the matter of governmental role, we hope the educational processes will not become solely devices for endorsing or saluting existing governmental policies and practices.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC WOMEN

[Original: English]
15 September 1964

National affiliates of the International Council of Social Democratic Women "when planning their conferences, seminars, study weeks, etc., will use themes connected with Human Rights. They will also give publicity in their journals to various aspects of the problem".